

# PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE (PAO)

## A SOLDIER'S GUIDE TO DEALING WITH THE MEDIA DURING REINTEGRATION

Within established guidelines, it is our responsibility to talk to the media (and subsequently, the public). Leaders and Soldiers who refuse to talk to the media give the impression that they're withholding information. When dealing with the news media, remember:

- ❖ DO protect classified information and preserve operational security. **Avoid making statements relating to exact numbers and locations of troops and equipment, ongoing or future operations, and rules of engagement.**
- ❖ DO "stay in your lane." Talk about your job, responsibilities, and other matters within your expertise and control. Avoid speculating and answering "what if" questions.
- ❖ DO talk about what you plan to do now that you are back from deployment. Talk about the things you missed or what you look forward to now that you have returned safely.
- ❖ DO talk about how the deployment affected your family and friends. A majority of the stories covered by the media will deal with the family. So you may want to talk about the support you received from family and friends during your deployment. You've had a rough time—so has your family, give them plenty of credit.
- ❖ DO remember that all discussions with reporters are "on the record" — so if you don't want to read it in the paper or hear it on TV, don't say it.
- ❖ DO Keep your answers clear and relevant, and use examples that are easily understood. Avoid using jargon and acronyms. Be honest, open, and forthright. If you don't know the answer to a question, simply say, "I don't know." If a question is classified, simply tell the reporter so.
- ❖ DO think about your response before you answer—you don't have to answer immediately.
- ❖ DON'T let the reporter put words in your mouth. Don't repeat their "buzz words." You don't have to accept his/her facts or figures as the truth.
- ❖ DON'T confiscate film, audio/video tapes, or reporters notes if classified or sensitive information is inadvertently released. Report the incident by the quickest means possible to the unit commander or public affairs officer.
- ❖ DON'T be afraid to ask a reporter to repeat a question.

If you have any questions or concerns about dealing with the media, contact the Fort Benning Public Affairs Office at 706-545-3512/545-2237/545-2211.